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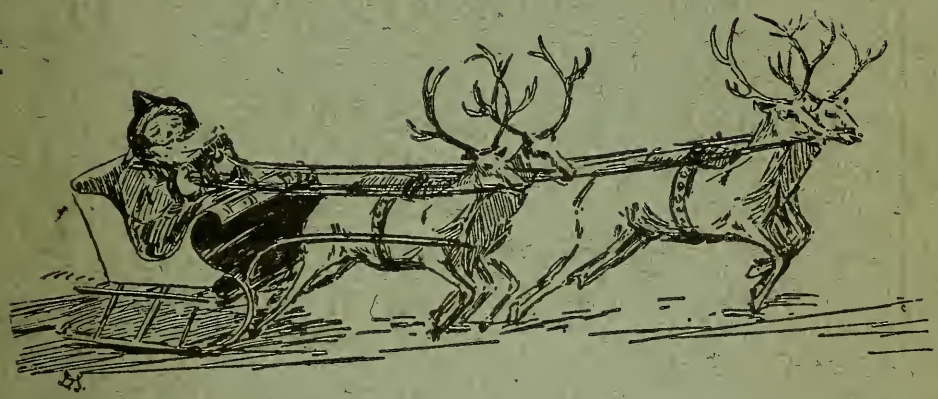
When Santa Claus Went to The Front.

—BY—

ETHEL E. REED and MARTHA G. KENDALL.



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THE ELDRIDGE ENTERTAINMENT HOUSE

FRANKLIN, OHIO - - - - DENVER, COLO.

When Santa Claus Went to the Front.

By Ethel E. Reed and Martha G. Kendall.

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CHARACTERS

Reader	Mrs. Ruggles
Uncle Sam	Sarah Maud Ruggles
Barkis	Clement Ruggles
Colonel	Cornelius Ruggles
Red Cross Nurse	Kitty Ruggles
Rip Van Winkle	Eily Ruggles
Miss Ophelia St. Clare	Peoria Ruggles
Topsy	Peter Ruggles
Shylock	Larry Ruggles
A Witch	Mrs. Santa Claus
A Ghost	Sheriff
A Fairy	Clerk of Courts

Four Jurors—one male and three female.

DEC 12 1918

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When Santa Claus Went to the Front.

SCENE I.

Full stage. Any interior setting. The Reader should stand at the extreme right of stage in front of the curtain. The first ten lines are spoken before the curtain rises. After each character has responded in turn to the Reader's introduction he should remain on the stage, sitting or standing, unconscious of presence of the others until the Fairy awakens all.

Reader—

'Twas the night before Christmas, when in each
house,
Every creature is worrying, even the mouse.
No stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
For they knew that St. Nicholas could not be there.
For St. Nick was performing brave deeds of war,
While his wife, do her best, could not travel so far.
Children in kerchiefs and parents in caps
Could not settle down for their long night's nap.
For months Uncle Sam had listened to much
chatter,
And now he is trying to solve the matter.

(Curtain rises. Uncle Sam discovered in soliloquy)

Uncle Sam—To be or not to be; to do or not to do; to conserve or not to conserve; to deny ourselves or not to deny ourselves—this is what my people are deciding. Never have they failed me! How nobly they responded, 4,000,000 of them, to the first Liberty Loan, and better still to the second. They have simply said, "My money is my country's money, when she's in need." And how industry has responded! True, there are strikes and explosions, but these have been the result of German money and disloyal aliens. But labor has been patriotic and capital has put its plants at the disposal of the government. And my boys! God bless them! America never has been ashamed of her manhood and is not now. I'm

proud of them. Mothers, dear mothers, it is you who really sacrifice. But how nobly you do it! Some may doubt but never a mother, "God's in his Heaven, All's right with the world." And loyal are all our women who so heartily respond to the call for the conservation of food and who so generously devote their time to the work of the Red Cross. But listen to our children sing "America,"—there is the true spirit of patriotism.

(Children's voices outside.)

My country, 'tis of thee
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee, I sing.
Long may our land be bright,
With Freedom's holy light,
Protect us by thy might,
Great God, our King.

Reader—

In war times each their place must be fillin',
And as you see—Barkis was willin'.

(Enter Barkis)

Barkis—Well, well, many's the trip I've made from Yarmouth to Blunderstone, yes, many Christmases I've dood it, but this un beats them all. Why that 'ere old horse of mine has hauled so many Christmas packages I'll wager he's packed a whole store, but this year it's different.

Why, that load I fetched yesterday was no bigger'n what I haul in July. I reckon the nag'll be sleek when the season has closed. Well—Barkis is willin'.

It's a heap they talk about these Christmas doin's. I don't pay much attention to it, reckon if I had a son in the army I'd think a bit different, anyway it saves me and my horse and—Barkis is willin'.

I never did have much fer Christmas but since I've known Miss Peggoty it's different—but I wouldn't know what to buy a woman—so Barkis is willin'.

I like to hear this war talk. I've got a kindly feelin' for the boys at the front—if I was younger and twarn't for Miss Peggoty I'd be there myself; it's all right to do a bit to help them and the poor starvin' creatures what's

got no money—so again, Barkis is willin'.

Reader—

The moon on the crest of the new fallen snow
Gave a lustre of midday to objects below,
While the Colonel paced through his room and thought
This is a battle which must be fought.

(Enter Colonel)

Colonel—We are on the threshold of a great world crisis. Never in the history of man have such issues been at stake. Men have hazarded their lives for the cause of right and honor; nations have bowed beneath the yoke for the love of conquest; kingdoms have tottered and fallen for justice; but it remains for us to see the civilized world enthralled in the conflict which shall decide whether future generations shall have tyranny or freedom.

We hesitated long—now that we have accepted the gauntlet thrown down to us, shall we be the last to cross the threshold?

Citizens, what of our duty? We have money—do we use it for the right or hoard it for the greed of gain; we have intellectual geniuses whose talents the allied forces have long courted; we have men, aye, men imbued with the spirit of our forefathers, as brave, heroic and loyal as any who ever entered battle. These are some of our resources. If we are entering the war as patriots all are freely given.

Who dares say we are slackers in even the smallest degree. The stand-pat pacifist—where is he? Winning his ambitious laurels, bewailing the fate of a nation who cannot appreciate him. The Christmas-spirited man who cannot deny himself a few transient pleasures—where is he? Go tell him you who have some sparks of loyalty, now is his season to teach his children patriotism and rather let the Christ spirit seize him that they unto their children's children may be accounted as being the noble spirits of a loyal nation, which stood not mute when stretched to them in appealing despair were the hands of innocent nations, victims of violated rights, treachery and crime.

Shall we stand aghast even at the bloody spectacle of battle or shall we not rather with the chivalric spirit of the knights of old enter in and do our bit to make the world safe for democracy. And in this serving show to the world the dignity of service, the loyalty of service.

Reader—

With little black Topsy so lively and quick,
Miss Ophelia was struggling until she was sick.

(Enter Miss Ophelia, Topsy following)

Miss Ophelia—Now, Topsy, I want to talk to you about Christmas. You know our nation is in a state of turmoil.

Topsy—Please, Miss Feely, was dat ar state Kintuck?

O—What state, Topsy?

T—Dat state dey tarboiled. I used to hear mas'r tell how we came down from Kintuck.

O—Over in Belgium, Topsy, there are many little children who haven't any father and mother now. You have a father and mother, Topsy .

T—No, Miss Feely, I never had no father and mother, I just growed.

O—We are not going to buy Christmas presents this year, we are going to send our money to those poor little children. The only thing I have gotten, Topsy, is some candy. It is in there on my dresser and you mustn't touch it till Christmas.

T—Deed, Miss Feely, I won't tech dat.

O—I'll show you a picture of those very children. *(Miss Ophelia goes to the table and picks up a magazine. Topsy takes a bite of candy from her sleeve. When Miss Ophelia turns around she notices a piece of dried beef hanging from Topsy's other sleeve.)*

O—What's this You naughty wicked child, on our meatless day! What makes you act so disloyal to your country, Topsy?

T—Why, dat ar am dried beef! How could dat a got caught in my sleeve?

O—Topsy, you naughty girl, don't you tell me a lie. You stole that dried beef.

T—Missis, I declare for't I didn't.

O—I don't know what I shall do with you, Topsy. I

don't want to whip you.

T—Laws, Missis, I'se used to whippin'. I 'spect it's good for me. But I never seed dat ar.

O—Don't you tell me that again.

(Miss Ophelia shakes Topsy violently and the candy falls from her sleeve. Topsy throws herself on the floor crying and kicking.)

T—Law, Miss Feely, I'll never do't again. I'se so wicked. I'se so wicked.

Reader—

Like the man he was after twenty years' slumber,
Rip thought about it too and began to wonder.

(Enter Rip Van Winkle)

Rip Van Winkle— I'm not myself—I'm somebody else. I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they've changed my gun, and everything's changed and I'm changed. I don t know nobody and they all talk so queer. Everybody s talking about having no meat today and this is only Tuesday We never did have much meat at our house only when I happened to shoot something. Tomorrow they say it's to be wheatless—wheatless? That's mighty queer. What do the women make out of wheat anyway? Oh, I suppose bread, and pies and cakes, and so on. Well mother's old fashioned pone always suited me good enough. And what was that other thing that woman read off that card? Oh, yes, wasteless. Well, I guess if there are six or eight kids around and a dog or two there ain't much danger but that'll be all et up. But 'bout the best idee is not fussin' so much over Christmas. That always did make me tired for to have to hurry so fast. Now if the women don't have to work at gettin' up a big dinner or gettin' presents for folks they wished they'd never seen, they can just sit down and rest and enjoy themselves. An' won't it be nice not to have no kid a blowin' a tin horn in your ear? Laws, some folks may think these things is a hardship but arter they try them onc't they'll think it's bliss.

Reader—

The Red Cross Nurse sees nothing in toys,
In comparison with the needs of our brave boys.

(Enter Red Cross Nurse)

Red Cross Nurse—An angel of mercy they call me. I court not that name. I am only an American woman trying to do my bit—and I stand not alone in doing it. Hundreds of others wear my emblem and yet seven thousand more stand ready for instant mobilization.

We are but your commissioners. You are the men behind the gun—and who are you? "You are the noble spirit of American generosity which has never been so strikingly exhibited, in so many forms and through so many agencies as during this greatest of all conflicts." You represent a whole country from cross-roads communities to metropolitan centers, thrilled with the spirit of self-sacrifice. You represent the mothers. Ah, mothers, blessed by all mankind art thou! Without a consciousness of your prayers we might falter mid the din and blood of battle, but backed by you for the sake of your boy, we will go forth seeking to alleviate his pain, to direct his thoughts and carry to him a mother's Christmas message. And after all it's the mothers who do the real giving when their sons go to war, and it's what you put in your sons that stands for the real stuff in the crisis.

(If desired, the Red Cross Nurse may introduce the song, "She wears a Cross Upon Her Sleeve," at this point. This song will be sent postpaid by the ELDRIDGE ENTERTAINMENT HOUSE *on receipt of 25 cents.)*

Reader—

More rapid than eagles their coursers they came,
While Mrs. Ruggles shouted and called them by name.

(Enter Mrs. Ruggles; family tagging behind)

Mrs. Ruggles—Sarah Maud, Kitty, Eily, Peoria, Clem, Peter, Cornelius, Larry.

Well, if I do say as shouldn't, I never see a cleaner, more stylish mess of children in my life! But I do wish Ruggles could look at ye for a minute! Larry Ruggles, how many times have I got to tell yer not ter keep pullin' at yer sash? Haven't I told yer if it comes ontied, yer waist 'n skirt'll part comp'ny in the middle, 'n then where'll yer be? Now look me in the eye, all of yer! I've

of'en told yer what kind of a family the McGrills was. I've got reason to be proud, goodness knows! Your uncle is on the police force of Venice; you can take up the paper most any day an' see his name printed right out—James McGrill—'n I can't have my children fetched up common, like some folks; when they go out they've got to have clo'es and learn to act decent!

Now I want ter see how yer goin' to behave when yer git ther tomorrow night. 'Taint so awful easy as you think 't is. Let's start in at the beginnin' 'n act out the whole business. Pile out into the hall there, every last one o' ye, 'n show me how yer goin' to go int' the parlor. This'll be the parlor, 'n I'll be Mis' McIntosh. *(Noisy clatter in the hall. They straggle in, all giggling except Sarah Maud who looks dazed. Larry falls in head foremost.)*

There, I know yer'd do it in some sech fool way! Now go out there and try it over again, every last one o' ye, 'n' if Larry can't come in on two legs he can stay ter home—d'yer hear?

(Go solemnly into the hall and enter with lock step, a scared expression on every countenance.)

No, no, no! That's worse yet; yer look for all the world like a gang of prisoners. There ain't no style ter that; spread out more, can't yer, 'n act kind o' careless-like—nobody's goin' ter kill ye! That ain't what a dinner party is.

(Third time is successful.)

Now look me in the eye. You're goin' to a Christmas party where they'll have a tree but you ain't goin' to take no presents fer that haint stylish this year. And when ye git thar and they ask ye if ye want to put any gifts on the tree, Sarah Maud must speak up and say, kinder sprised like, "We ain't givin' no Christmas presents. We sent our money to the Red Cross this year. Now, can you remember?

All—Yes marm.

Mrs. R.—What have you got to do with it? Did I tell you to say it? Warn't I a-talkin to Sarah Maud?

All—Yes, marm. *(subdued).*

Mrs. R.—Now we won't leave nothin' to chance. Git up, all of ye and try it. Speak up, Sarah Maud.

Sarah M.— (Stammers).

Mrs. R.—Quick!

Sarah M.—Ma thought we wouldn't give no Red Cross this year—but we'd give our money to Christmas presents.

(Boys giggle).

Mrs. R.—Oh, whatever shall I do with yer? I spose I've got to learn it to yer!

(Mrs. R .teaches to her word for word).

Mrs. R.—Now Cornelius, what are *you* goin' to say to make yerself good comp'ny?

Cornelius—Do? Me? Dunno.

Mrs. R.—Well, ye ain't goin' to set there like a bump on a log 'thout sayin' a word ter pay for yer vittles are ye? Ask Mis' McIntosh how she's feelin' this evenin', or if Mr. McIntosh is sleepin' much these nights or if the baby still keeps him awake, or somethin' like that. Now we'll make believe we've got ter the dinner—that won't be so hard, 'cause yer'll have somethin' to do—it's awful bothersome to stan' around an' act stylish. If they have napkins, Sarah Maud down to Peory may put 'em in their laps, 'n the rest of ye can tuck 'em in yer necks. Don't eat with yer fingers—don't grab no vittles off one 'nother's plates; don't reach out fer nothin', but wait till yer asked, 'n if you never GIT asked, don't git up an' grab it—Don't spill nothin' on the tablecloth, or like's not Mis' McIntosh 'll send yer away from the table—'n I hope she will if yer do! Now, we'll try a few things ter see how they'll go! Mr. Clement, do you eat corn bread?

Clem—We git that to home onct a day.

Mrs. R.—Clement McGrill Ruggles, do you mean to tell me you'd say that to a dinner party? I'll give ye one more chance. Mr. Clement, will you take some of the corn bread?

Clem—Yes, marm, thank ye kindly, if you happen ter have any handy.

Mrs. R.—Very good, indeed! But they won't give yer two tries tonight—yer jest remember that! Miss Peory, do you speak for white or dark meat?

Peoria—I ain't particular as ter color—anything that nobody else wants will suit me.

Mrs. R.—First rate! Nobody could speak more genteel than that. Miss Kitty, will you have sugar in yer coffee?

Kitty—I like two spoonfuls, but I'll just take one, cause our minister says we must save sugar and he don't use none.

(Peter grunts.)

Mrs. R.—You jest stop your gruntin', Peter Ruggles; that warn't greedy, that was all right. I wish I could git it inter yer heads that it ain't so much what yer say, as the way you say it. And don't keep starin' cross-eyed at your necktie pin, or I'll take it out 'n sew it on to Clem or Cornelius; Sarah Maud 'll keep her eye on it, 'n if it turns broken side out she'll tell yer. Gracious! I shouldn't think you'd ever seen nor worn no jool'ry in yer life. Eily, you and Larry just look at the rest an' do's they do, 'n the Lord have mercy on ye 'n help ye to act decent! Now is there anything more ye'd like to practice?

Peter—If yer tell me one more thing, I can't set up an' eat, I'm so cram full of manners now, I'm ready to bust, 'thout no dinner at all.

Cornelius—Me too.

Mrs. R.—Well, I'm sorry for yer both, if the 'mount o' manners yer've got on hand now troubles ye, you're dreadful easy hurt! Now Sarah Maud, after dinner, about once in so often, you must git up an' say, "I guess we'd better be going"; 'n if they say, "Oh, no, set a while longer," yer can set; but if they don't say nothin' you've got ter get up 'n go. Now hev yer got that int' yer head?

Sarah M.—Well, seems as if this whole dinner party set right square on top o' me! Mebbe I could manage my own manners, but to manage nine mannerses is worse 'n stayin' to home.

Mrs. R.—Oh, don't fret, I guess you'll git along. I wouldn't mind if folks would only say: "Oh, children will be children"; but they won't. They'll say: "Land o' goodness, who fetched them children up?" Now it ain't

quite time to go so you can set awhile but remember 'bout the Christmas presents, don't talk all ter once—Peter, don't keep screwin' yer scarf-pin; Cornelius, hold yer head up straight; Sarah Maud, don't take yer eyes off o' Larry, 'n Larry you keep holt of Sarah Maud 'n do jest as she says—'n whatever you do, all of yer, never forgit for one second that yer mother was a McGrill and she has the Christmas spirit of the McGrills.

Reader—

Into his house old Shylock goes
Wringing his hands and wailing his woes.

(Enter Shylock)

Shylock—The curse never fell upon our nation till now; I never felt it till now; two thousand dollars in toys. I would that the Christmas shoppers were dead at my feet and the toys buried in the deep. Why, so, thou loss upon loss! The store stocked up with so much and no one to buy. If I can catch them once in a bargain I will feed fat the hated grudge I bear them. They hate our sacred nation and they rail, even there where shoppers most do congregate, on me, my bargains, and my well won thrift, which they call greed. Cursed be my tribe if I forgive them. But I have my liberty bonds, my untaxed liberty bonds. They cannot take my liberty bonds though they do take my Christmas profits. No ill luck stirring but what lights on my shoulders; no sighs but of my breathing; no tears but of my shedding. They take my house when they do take the prop that doth sustain my house; they take my life when they do take the means whereby I live.

Reader—

The witch with a cauldron in her hand,
A look, which betokens some evil she's planned.

(Enter Witch)

Witch—Thrice the Yuletide fete has passed,
Thrice the Yuletide log has burned
Since the guns of nations turned.
Harpies cry, "'Tis time, see to it
We should do our bit, our bit."
'Round about the cauldron go,

On and in the message throw—
Men that under that cold steel
Weeks and months for woe or weal,
Have their lives—our honor staked,
And 'tis time we should be waked
From our tranquil, sweet repose,
To do honor to all those,
Who are facing our strong foes.
Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble,
Fillet of their honored toil,
In the cauldron bake and boil.
Honored is their toil and strife
Day by day and all through life.
Hark! May that thought now take wing ,
And through all the ages ring,
We, who may not fight the foe,
Will in respect to those who go,
Now let our Yuletide log burn low.
Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble,
For our hearts 'twill be
To behold a gift-bare tree,
No sacrifice, as 'tis to thee
To fight for Democracy.

Reader—

As dry leaves that before the wild hurricanes fly,
When they meet with an obstacle mount to the sky.
So the ghost of past Christmases comes to life,
And gives his opinion concerning the strife.

(Enter Ghost)

Ghost—There was an old Santa with a bag of toys,
Who came to good little girls and boys.
(Mum-m)
He thought he'd go to war one day,
To kill the kaiser, so they say.
(Mum-m)
But when he got to the war front
He found it was no simple stunt.
(Mum-m)

So he wrote back to his wife once more:
"You take the toys to every door."
(Mum-m)
She read the word, she looked her woe,
On such a trip I cannot go.
(Mum-m)
The mothers to Mrs. Santa say:
"Won't you take his place when he's away?"
(Mum-m)
The children to Mrs. Santa say:
"Please bring us toys with which to play."
(Mum-m)
Mrs. Santa to the people say:
(Mum-m)

Reader—

And then in a twinkle a fairy appears,
Calming each heart and quieting all fears.

(The Ghost sinks to the floor and remains there until awakened by the fairy. Enter Fairy. She waves her wand and all the characters fall asleep.)

Reader—

When who should appear but Mrs. Santa herself.

(Enter Mrs. Santa Claus. She distributes her gifts, giving to Miss Ophelia a photograph, to the Ruggles children an old shoe, a torn stocking, a scrubbing brush and a box of Dutch Cleanser, to Shylock an empty money bag and to the Witch a stuffed black cat. With a nod she exits. Her actions must be timed to lines spoken by the reader.)

Reader—

Bearing her pack like a sly little elf.
She spoke not a word but went straight to work,
Distributing her gifts, then turned with a jerk.
She gazes with pleasure at the ones in repose,
Gives a quaint little nod and out the door goes.

Reader—

Then back comes the fairy with a wand in her hand,
And all in a thrice they return from dreamland.

(Enter Fairy)

(Ghost rises slowly and walks around looking each one in the face.)

Ghost—Again man's clamor brings me from my grave. As when I walked the earth man is never satisfied. I command you to tell me who thou art.

Witch—I'm a witch.

Ghost—And who art thou?

Shylock—By the Holy fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, I am Shylock, a penniless man of the Israelitish tribe.

Ghost—And who art thou?

Mrs. Ruggles—I am Mrs. Ruggles who was a McGrill and my brother is on the police force of Venice.

Ghost—And who art thou?

R. C. Nurse—I am but an American woman trying to do my bit.

Ghost—And who art thou?

Rip—Me? I'm Rip Van Winkle. Hain't you heard of Rip?

Ghost—And who art thou?

Miss Ophelia—I'm Miss Ophelia St. Clare.

Ghost—And who art thou?

Topsy—I'm nobody—just Topsy, what just growed.

Ghost—And who art thou?

Barkis—Barkis, and for justice Barkis is willin'.

Ghost—And who art thou?

Colonel—I'm a colonel who stands for the honor of my country, ready to defend her from injustice.

Ghost—And who art thou?

Uncle Sam—Uncle Sam.

Ghost—Enough said. Bring to trial Mrs. Santa Claus that these clamors may be satisfied. Swear.

Uncle Sam—In justice I will defend her.

Ghost—Be thou counsel for the plaintiff? Swear.

Colonel—I will.

Ghost—Thou willing for justice, be thou the judge. Swear.

Barkis—Barkis is willin 'to swear.

Ghost—How many will appear as witness for Mrs. Santa Claus?

I *(meek)*

Ghost—How many will appear against her?

I *(strong)*

Topsy—(Sings)

Fly away old Santa's wife,
Fly away to rest.
Lay your kinky, wooly head
On your mammy's breast.

(Ghost moves towards Topsy)

Ghost—I command you as witnesses to appear at this trial. Swear. *(All assent.)*

Ghost—Choose thou no common jury for this trial. Have but five members, one man and four women. This woman must be judged by an unbiased jury. Swear.

Barkis—Barkis is willin' to swear.

SCENE II.

(The day after Christmas. The stage represents a court-room. Jury box right. Judge's desk left. Witness chair in center. Director will have to be guided by space available but give the setting the atmosphere of a court-room in so far as possible.)

Clerk of Court—Oi—Oi—Oi. This dishonorable court is now in session.

Judge—The clerk will announce the case to be tried.

Clerk—Case 99,999. The abused citizens of Venice against Mrs. Santa Claus, charged with the distribution of ill-chosen, senseless, and disfigured gifts, on the night before Xmas.

Judge—Who appears for the abused citizens?

Colonel—I do, your honor.

Judge—For the defendant?

Uncle Sam—I, your honor.

Judge—Any objection to proceeding to trial?

(Counsel shake heads.)

Judge—The sheriff will produce the prisoner.

(Sheriff enters with Mrs. Santa Claus.)

Judge—The clerk will read the panel of jurors for the case.

(Clerk reads four names.)

Judge—The clerk will now swear at, I mean swear in, the jurors.

Clerk—You will please stand and raise your right hand and repeat after me. *(Jurors stand, raise hands, some right, some left, some both, and repeat oath with variations.)* You do sullenly swear to the worst of your ability—to judge unfairly and partially—all evidence—pro and con—whatever that means—in all cases—or other packages—presented to this court—so help you Ananias and Sapphira!

Judge—The jurors will please be seated. The clerk will read the indictment in this case. The prisoner will stand and raise her right hand as the indictment is read.

Clerk—Mrs .Santa Claus, the state of Cecil, upon complaint of the plaintiff, the abused citizens of the town of Venice in the aforesaid state alleged, charges and claims that in the night of the 24th day of December in the year of Your Lord, 1917, you did wilfully, feloniously, and with malice aforesaid distribute, place beside or in the hands of the aforesaid abused citizens of Venice, illegally, unlawfully, and feloniously, heinous, horrible and hideous gifts without their knowledge or consent. You are charged on four accounts: to-wit—First, on the aforesaid night you did, uncharitably and with malicious forethought leave in the hands of Miss Ophelia St. Clair, a lady in waiting, a picture the exact prototype of her secretly, but continuously admired colonel who is here to defend the plaintiff. Second—On the aforesaid night you did deliberately offend the thrifty mind of Mrs. Ruggles by presenting to four of her children one old shoe, one much worn stocking, a rice-root scrubbing brush and a box of Dutch Cleanser. Third—On the aforesaid night you did unsympathetically grieve Shylock, a penniless man of the Israelitish tribe by causing him to search for one hour through an empty money bag. Fourth—On the aforesaid night, you did daringly dispose of a stuffed black cat to a witch who had threatened dire revenge on the real Santa Claus did he not this year leave

her a real black cat. What do you say to these charges—Are you guilty or not guilty?

Mrs. Santa—Not guilty!

Judge—The prisoner may be seated. To save time the witnesses will be sworn in at once. Will the counsel for the plaintiff read a list of the witnesses?

Colonel—Your honor, I shall call the following: Miss Ophelia St. Clare, Mrs. Ruggles, Shylock and the Witch.

Judge—Will the counsel for the defense present his list of witnesses?

Uncle Sam—Your honor, I'll call on the following: Rip Van Winkle, the Red Cross Nurse and Mrs. Ruggles.

Judge—Will the witnesses please stand in a row before the Clerk of the Court and be sworn at. *(Witnesses rise and repeat oath with desired variations.)*

Clerk—Raise your right hand and repeat after me. You do sullenly swear—without profanity—to tell the truth—once in a while—to tell the whole truth—sometimes—and to tell nothing but the truth—when you can't get out of it—So help you the McDonald Outlook. *(Or name of local newspaper.)*

Judge—The witnesses may be seated. The first witness for the prosecution may take the stand.

Colonel—Miss Ophelia St. Clare. *(She takes the stand.)* What is your name?

Miss Ophelia—Miss Ophelia St. Clare.

Topsy—She spects to be Mrs. Colonel some day.

Colonel—What is your occupation?

Ophelia—A lady of Southern refinement has no occupation.

Topsy—I dose it all; I make the bed and puts away Miss Feely's powder and all dem things that she has on her haid and dose everything.

Colonel—Miss St. Clare, what is your charge against the prisoner?

Miss Ophelia—She quite inappropriately presented me with a picture.

(Topsy points to Colonel.)

Colonel—Mrs. Santa, who has taken the work of her

husband, then has much displeased you with the gift?

Miss Ophelia—No-o-o-o.

Topsy—She liked it.

Colonel—That is all.

Judge—Does the counsel for the defense wish to examine across?

Uncle Sam—I do, your honor. Miss St. Clare have you the picture with you which offended you so much?

Miss Ophelia—I have not.

Topsy—Why what'd you does wit' dat ar? Don't youse like de Colonel no more?

Uncle Sam—That is all.

Judge—The witness is dismissed. Second witness for the prosecution.

Colonel—The witch will take the stand. Your name?

Witch—When shall we two meet again. In thunder, lightning, or in rain? When the hurly burly's done, when the trial is lost or won. That will be ere the set of sun. And the place in the streets of Venice. There I will meet with Mrs. Santa Claus.

Judge—Barkis is willin' to have that witness removed. Next witness for the prosecution?

Colonel—Shylock will take the stand. Your name?

Shylock—Shylock is my name.

Colonel—Your occupation?

Shylock—The merchants call me a usurer but I am a poor penniless Jew.

Colonel—What is your charge against the prisoner?

Shylock—I want none of their Christmas. I want to sell my toys, my store full of toys. She bought no toys from me.

Colonel—Did she present you with any gift.

Shylock—A money bag—an empty money bag.

Colonel—You do not consider an empty money bag of any value then? And you think she should be punished for not buying toys from you?

Shylock—*(Shakes head)*—Oh, wise young lawyer. How I do honor thee.

Colonel—That is all.

Judge—Does the counsel for the defense want to examine across?

Uncle Sam—Yes, your honor. You are sure there was no money in the bag?

Shylock—None that I could find.

Uncle Sam—Let me see the money bag.

Shylock—The money bag is good; it will hold moneys. *(Holds back the money bag.)*

Uncle Sam—That is all.

Judge—Has the plaintiff any more witnesses?

Colonel—Your honor, four of Mrs. Ruggles' children will be represented by their mother, Mrs. Ruggles *(Nod to come up.)*

Mrs. Ruggles—Sarah Maud, Kitty, Clem, Peter. Now, Cornelius, you and Eily, Peoria and Larry stay there. You liked what you got.

Colonel—Your name?

Mrs. Ruggles—Well, my real name is Irene Sylvia Marie McGrill Ruggles, but if ye wanted a letter to reach me, I'd advise ye to address Mrs. R. U. Ruggles. You know at the postoffice it's only our husbands that count. We can't vote yet, you see. But you just wait till we get to vote.

Colonel—What is your occupation?

Mrs. R.—Oh, washin' and ironin' and bakin' and sweepin' and sewin' and dustin' and, oh, yes, keepin' the kids in style.

Colonel—What is your charge against the plaintiff?

Mrs. R.—Oh, I got four charges. Now there's Eily, she's got this old shoe. Show it to the man Eily. Now she wanted new shoes, any woman ought to know that much, and there's Peter with that old stocking. It's full of holes but I might of darned it if there'd been two of 'em, and they'd been a little bigger, but that one wouldn't even make a pair for Larry. An' Sarah Maud got this rice-root scrubbing brush. Now Sarah Maud's always been my right hand man for cleaning up and fixin' up the rest of the young 'uns, but she can't use a rice-root scrubbin' brush 'cause this 'ud just ruin their complexion an' I allers was mighty perticular about my children and then Cornelius got that box o' Dutch Cleanser. What's a boy want with Dutch Cleanser! Course now I

kin use it in scrubbin, but a boy don't want that for a Christmas present. Now did you, Cornelius?

Colonel—That's all, your honor.

Judge—Does the counsel for the defense want to examine across?

Uncle Sam—Yes, your honor. Now answer me briefly. Did the children receive no other presents from Mrs. Santa Claus?

Mrs. R.—Well, Kitty got a doll, the prettiest little doll you ever seen, and Peory got the most beautiful brooch and Clem got a mouth organ and kin jest play fine on it already and Larry got a nice horn. Show yer presents to the gentleman, children. *(Four jump up and blow horn and mouth organ.)*

Uncle Sam—(Motioning them to sit down.) I thought these were the children you were defending.

Mrs. R.—I thought yer asked me if the children didn't get no other presents. I wanted yer ter know that Mrs. Santa Claus didn't give all unnice gifts to my children. She didn't dare, cause my brother is on the police force of Venice.

Uncle Sam—That is all.

Judge—Any further witnesses for the plaintiff?

Colonel—None, your honor.

Judge—Barkis is willin'. The defense will introduce its evidence.

Uncle Sam—Your honor, the first gentleman I shall call to the stand is Rip Van Winkle. What is your name, sir?

Rip—Rip Van Winkle, but most folks call me Rip.

Uncle Sam—Your occupation?

Rip—For the past twenty years it seems to have been sleepin'.

Uncle Sam—You believe that Mrs. Santa Claus did her best in taking her husband's place?

Rip—Better'n I could o' done, I know. But after a feller's slept 20 years he don't pertend to know much about Christmas.

U. S.—You received a gift satisfactory to you?

Rip—Yes, I got a beautiful handkerchief *(producing handkerchief)*.

U. S.—That would certainly be useful. That is all.

Judge—Colonel, want to ask any questions?

Colonel—Do you think Mrs. Santa Claus knew you and favored you, especially with that gift or do you think it happened by chance?

Rip—Oh, she'd know me all right. Everybody knows Rip.

Colonel—That is all.

Judge—Bring on the next witness.

U. S.—A Red Cross Nurse. Your name?

R. C. N.—Mary Leonard.

U. S.—Your occupation?

Nurse—Caring for the wounded soldiers.

U. S.—What did Mrs. Santa Claus give you?

Nurse—She gave me material with which to make bandages for my soldiers.

U. S.—Do you think that, on the whole she did her work well?

Nurse—I do.

U.S.—Then you approve of useful gifts this Christmas?

Nurse—I certainly do.

Judge—Does the counsel for the plaintiff want to examine across?

Colonel—No, your honor.

Judge—The defense will call the last witness.

Uncle Sam—Call Mrs. Ruggles again.

Judge—Mrs. Ruggles, I believe you have already given your name in full and your occupation. What testimony have you to give in favor of Mrs. Santa Claus?

Mrs. R.—I ain't goin' to say nothin' this time, cause Kitty and Peory an' Clem an' Larry were just so tickled over their presents that they're goin' ter sing a song fer you. Come on up Kitty, and Peory and Clem and Larry, and sing yer song. *(They come down center and sing.*)*

Judge—Well, Colonel, want to examine that bunch?

Colonel—No, your honor.

**"When Good Old Kris Comes 'Round," to be found in Ye Merry Tunes. Price 15 cents.*

Judge—Barkis is mighty glad. Any more witnesses?

(Uncle Sam shakes head.)

Judge—Uncle Sam will then close for the defense.

U. S.—Your honor, I will review the status of the case. The charge is brought by the citizens of Venice, who term themselves "abused;" but are they? First a lady objects because she received the photograph of a man whom her slave assures us, she admires. Should she object to this? Mrs. Santa, who knows the inmost thoughts of all, but gave what she considered, and I think we all agree with her, a very appropriate gift. And consider the gifts presented to the Ruggles family—eight members and every gift useful in some way—three furnish amusement for the family, one serves as a beautiful ornament, two others well suited to the thrifty nature of the family, another serviceable for patches, and no one can deny the value of any kind of shoe these days. Another witness terms his gift unjust because it contains no money, but does that mean that he does not consider the gift itself of any value? If so, then let him present it to the court. *(Turning to the Jew but Jew still keeps money bag.)* And would this learned court condemn a woman on the charge of one who can not give her name but only mutters revenge? Against this has been furnished evidence which proved the good work of an inexperienced worker. Therefore, honorable members of the jury, I entreat you to see that this prisoner is freed.

Judge—We will now listen to the closing argument for the prosecution.

Colonel—Your honor, in summing up the argument for the prosecution, I desire to be brief. To me the case already stands pleaded. We have listened to the plea of a woman—a woman of genteel birth and high culture, who has been wantonly insulted by what might have been thought to be a huge joke. And then a witch, incapable of pleading her cause, however, your honor, your very manhood will respond to her rights as a claimant of justice. Next we were represented by a man, unjustly dealt with—yet who seeks for justice—not revenge. Therefore, your honor, justice is his plea, consider this,

that in the cause of justice we seek alone our rights. If thou follow justice the court of Venice needs give sentence against this imposter here. Lastly and most ably spoke a woman, sole champion of her children's defrauded rights. In respect to womanhood; in respect to defenseless orphans, I beg of you hearken to that which she has witnessed. It doth appear to me you are a worthy judge —your exposition has been most sound. I charge you by the law whereof you are a well-deserving pillar—proceed with justice.

Judge—Honorable Jurors—So much has been said by the worthy and wordy lawyers in this case that there is little left for me to say. I have not the eloquence of my learned friends, the lawyers. I am glad of it. That's one disease I never had. I charge you in respect to your duty to give heed to all that has been said, decide as you please and Barkis is willin,' The jury need not retire to the jury room to decide on verdict but decide right here. *(Pause.)* Hain't you 'greed on a verdict yet?

Foreman—Sure.

Judge—The prisoner will stand and hear the verdict of the jury. Is the prisoner guilty or not guilty?

Foreman—Not guilty.

Jurors—No, she's guilty. Foreman's a grafter.

Judge—Well it doesn't make any difference anyway. I say she's not guilty, and in this court what I say goes. In behalf of Mrs. Santa's offended dignity, Barkis is willin' that ye git up and sing a song.

(All sing a Christmas song.)

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